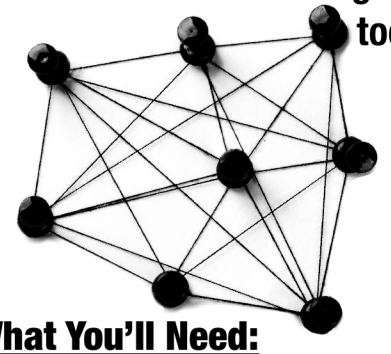
Assessing Risk

an abbreviated Vision Change Win toolkit



What You'll Need:

- 3-7 experienced individuals
- ~3 hours to meet
- List of known threats
- List of resources
- Way to physically record brainstorming
- Secure, tech-free meeting space

Definitions

Adversary: People or groups that can impact our ability to do our work. Ex: Groups organizing against your goals, police, antagonistic politicians, etc.

Assets: Information we are protecting, wouldn't want to be made public, and/or wouldn't want in the hands of our adversaries. Ex: strategy, private/comfidential/vulnerable information on members and allies

Capacity: Anything that increases safety or security. Ex: skills, resources, community/ partnered organizational support

Vulnerability: Any factor that makes it more likely for harm to occur. Ex: an unaddressed internal conflict, inherent defects of location

Threat: Types of harm, violence, or damage. Ex: harassment, intimidation, loss of funds

Resources: Anything that increases safety. Ex: abilities, community and organizational support, etc.

What is a risk assessment?

By first surveying the current political landscape and assessing current conditions, groups can develop a grounded understanding of what threats are most likely.

Why are they important?

They allow groups to focus their efforts on the most likely and imminent safety threats. Pairing current trends with last experience create better protocols and prevent harm.

a note on risk and trauma:

Many of us have developed patterns of fight, flight, freeze, appease, or other forms of dissociation from the ways we have navigated personal traumas in the past. These trauma responses may have worked then, but can close us off to methods that are more effective in and for community. Risk assessments can help us arrive at outcomes that function better in a collective and look outside individual traumas.

Getting Started

When building a risk assessment, it can be useful to include the right folks in the conversation. Use the prompts below to identify who should inform this risk assessment.

Who holds key information about your group's safety threats?

How will these key information holders inform your risk assessment?

Mapping Adversaries

State, non-state, and supposed allies can all function as opposition depending on the situation. Use the following prompts to identify potential sources of conflict.

Who are your adversaries?

What do they have the power to do?

What do your adversaries care about? Who has power over them?

Measuring Likelihood

There are many safety threats, but we must focus our energy on addressing only the most likely safety threats.

Start to measure likelihood by first researching potential threats at the national level.

Next, talk to coalition partners and likeminded folks about potential threats.

Lastly, look at your group's own past experience to include threats you have faced before.

Brainstorm likely threats:

Measuring Risk

Developing a list of threats and adversaries may feel overwhelming, but taking what we brainstormed on the previous page and entering them into the matrix below, we can begin to break it down.

Some threats are likely with a low impact, while others are rare but very impactful should they occur. Risks that are high in both metrics should be prioritized.

Impact	1 - Very Low	2 - Low	3 - Medium	4 - High	5 - Very High
5 - Very High					
4 - High					
3 - Medium					
2 - Low					
1 - Very Low					
Likelihood					

Prioritizing Risks

Likely risks are usually grouped into three categories; state, non-state, and internal. Others may include weather, traffic, and more. Take your answers from the matrix and identify 3-10 most likely risks. The two categories below will contain your safety planning first priorities.

High / V High Likelihood + High / V High Impact:

Medium / High Likelihood + Medium / High Impact: